423 will, and the new occupant cannot make the slightest protest.

It should be pointed out, however, that since land is most often abandoned because it was thought to be unproductive or haunted, there is rarely a claim to it by a former owner. In any event the matter is settled by the interested parties. The local administration and the canton chief rarely intervene in such cases.

Owners' rights over fruit trees in cultivated fields. Donsé 423 or néré [locust bean] trees whose fruits contain a yellowish, sweet 263 powder that is edible and [244] whose seeds are used to make soumbala, a fetid condiment much prized by the natives, remain the exclusive property of the former occupant. On the other hand, the tamsé (karite tree) belong to the new owner.

423 This is because the karite tree is found almost everywhere in the bush, while the néré is less common.

Rights of the chiefs over cultivated land. As a general rule, 425 since the principle of right by possession is honored among the 423 Mossi, a canton chief will not confiscate without reason cultivated land belonging to one of his subjects if the land has always been occupied by the occupant's grandparents.

When the land is unoccupied, however, or newly occupied, the canton chief may, by virtue of his absolute authority over his territory, take possession, and the new owner may not claim any compensation.

Field Work

241 In principle, a family field is held in common. When a woman 562 grows old, however, she no longer does field work with her hus- 595 band. She has her own field and feeds herself as best she may, since her husband pays no further attention to her and no longer supports her. The work is done by the family as a group, and the size of the field varies with the size of the family.

241 Early in the morning, usually before [245] sunrise, the head 512 of the family wakens the young people. They go out to the field, which may be five to ten kilometers away. Around ten o'clock, the women bring the remains of last night's sagbo or, lacking that, some millet flour which is taken in water.

631 powers to his vassals, the province chiefs, who in turn entrust them to the canton chiefs, and these do likewise with the village chiefs. Thus, when a native wants to move from one canton to another, or 631 even from one village to another, he must be authorized to do so. 166 He must request the permission of the canton or village chief to settle 425 in such-and-such a place, and the chief of the village where he wants to live tells him where he may build his huts and which field he may cultivate. The naba may dispossess one of his subjects, if he so wishes, and give his field to another. After all, he "has the strength." This rarely happens, however, and a native who has cleared a piece of bush, fertilized a plot to sow maize, sowed and weeded the ground, is usually assured of a harvest, except in case of war. If a man is evicted, on the other hand, there is no appeal; neither the canton chief nor the province chief would listen to him; they would do the same thing if the opportunity arose.

421 There is no communal property. Every individual works his fields for his own account; he himself collects the fruit of his labor and remains its undisputed master. Nevertheless, every native owes his 65 chiefs and benefactors a tithe; and at harvest time it is interesting 431 to watch everyone sorting ears of maize, braiding sorghum stems, and measuring out baskets of small millet. The village chief is to get so many ears of maize; the canton chief, if he does not reside too far away, so many others; the father- or fathers-in-law will get theirs, and so will one friend or another to whom one owes cowries, or who has previously granted a favor. However, everyone who deals out goods right and left will in turn get some from various other people and approximately regain his expenditure. The village chiefs offer more sizable gifts to the canton chiefs, and the latter do likewise to the province chiefs.

651 These were, in fact, taxes, not fixed taxes per capita, but com- 661 pletely arbitrary ones. If the naba found a gift insufficient, he had no compunction about saying so, and the person involved had to comply. It is said that the naba of Koupéla paid annually 500,000 cowries (500 francs) and /23/ three horses to the naba of Bélousa, and a million cowries (1000 francs) in two installments to the Moro Naba, to whom he also gave five horses. The gifts to the Moro Naba were brought first to the naba of Bélousa and from there conveyed to Ouagadougou: ever the hierarchy.

This quasi-official tax, however, was not the only one. Whenever the Moro Naba wanted horses, cattle, or anything whatever, he

685 entitled to complain and merely removed the animal. If the damage was caused by a cow or donkey, the owner of the field had to obtain a witness and was entitled to recover damages.

425 Whoever found an object of small value, such as a knife or even a garment, was entitled to keep it, but anything valuable, such as a sheep, a donkey, or, all the more, a cow, had to be handed over to the naba and became his property.

684 837 The province chief alone could pass sentence on a rapist. He was beaten and put in irons, the girl was returned to her family, and, if she gave birth, the child was killed. If the girl had been promised to the naba, the rapist was put to death. An adulterer caught in flagrante delicto could be killed by the deceived husband, but if he had not been caught in flagrante delicto, if he had managed to run away, or if he had merely been denounced by the woman, the deceived husband could do nothing. A girl's seducer usually became her husband if she gave birth, but he had to provide another girl for her betrothed.

791 787 837 The province chief had a special procedure to insure the faithfulness of his numerous wives and his pages. When a wife or page did not behave properly, the Poẽnaba was supposed to point them out to the naba. He proceeded as follows. Every Friday the Poẽnaba left his village on foot, a whip in his hand. A servant preceded him with a leather satchel containing charms. No one was allowed to come near him. Everyone fled into the bush, and the path he had followed was closed to other people until they learned that the dreadful man had reached the home of the naba. The wives were gathered together. The Poẽnaba filled a large gourd with water, poured in his ingredients, and sat before it. The women came to him one by one and cast their reflection in the water. The Poẽnaba looked in and claimed to recognize those wives who were faithful and those who were not. The former were allowed to go free, but they were often beaten to remove any possible inclination to unfaithfulness. Those designated as unfaithful were seized and had to denounce their accomplice. Both the man and woman were clubbed to death. If the woman pointed out as guilty had no accomplice or refused to name him, she alone was killed. Women still point out with terror the place of execution. This procedure was very barbarous, and its abuses were flagrant. To avoid an accusation which would cost them /27/ their lives, the poor women were ready to do anything, and they presented the Poẽnaba with all the gifts they could gather in order to be spared.

651 "Market-place dues were levied by the Dara Haba, for the sovereign's account, on the markets surrounding Ouagadougou. The Moro Naba also got the tusks of elephants and one haunch of every buffalo or koba killed by hunters.

643 651 425 "Furthermore, the right of confiscation which the sovereign could use for his own benefit without any precise rule imperatively limiting the conditions under which he could exercise it, permitted him to augment, whenever needed, the revenue derived from his usual sources.

651 "Province chiefs, in turn, had the right to demand, through the canton chiefs, whatever they needed for the support of their families and retinues. Canton chiefs held the same rights over the villages within their rule. The village chiefs themselves received from their subjects a certain number of gifts."

692 Justice was rendered as follows: /580/

1. By the family heads, aided by the family elders.
2. By the village chiefs, aided by the village elders.
3. By the canton chiefs, aided by the elders of their own quarter.
4. By the province chiefs, aided by the elders of their own quarter and by the dignitaries of their entourage.
5. By the Moro Naba, aided by his ministers and the dignitaries of his entourage.

"The respective competence /legal authority/ of those various jurisdictions," says Moulins, "were in no way clearly determined or defined. The deed and the circumstances alone were taken into account in bringing up before a certain authority a matter which the lower jurisdiction had proved unable to resolve. A matter which the family council had been unable to solve was brought before the village chief, then the canton chief, the province chief, and finally the Moro Naba.

694 "Justice was free of charge in the sense that procedural expenses were unknown, but custom demanded that a litigant should never appear before a judge empty handed. He had to offer him at least a white chicken. The outcome of a trial must often have depended on the greater or lesser generosity displayed by the respective sides."

304 824 752 881 At the end of three days, the nané sends a few circumcised boys of preceding years, rasamba, to look in the bush for bark of the néré, karite, n'pékou, and the n'kouna trees. He has them boiled in a large canari and then allows the water to cool until it is lukewarm. Then he calls the bankonsé (this is the name of the newly circumcised boys in Mossi, bankonka in the singular, bankonsé in the plural) and orders them to wash their penes in this water. At the same time he has the leaves of the kantoboga boiled. This is an aloe-type plant of which we have already spoken /not translated/. When this washing is done, the bankonsé smear their penes with cow butter (karite butter is avoided because it is believed to soften the penis and to make it less virile), and then, after cutting kantoboga leaves into pieces, they wrap them around the member, forming a sort of sheath. These leaves are wrapped with cotton thread so they will stay in place. /260/

From then on, the same procedure is repeated every morning and every evening. The bankonsé undo the bandage, wash with néré or karite water, apply fresh butter and new kantoboga leaves. This is done until the wounds are healed.

Néré water, once prepared, keeps for seven days. The supply of kantoboga leaves is renewed only when there are no more on hand.

304 883 881 The bankonsé do not stir for the first three days. From the third to the tenth day, they begin to take a little exercise. For example, they fetch whatever water they need. At the end of ten days, they walk about in the bush, fetch firewood which they stack in piles, and do the same with straw. In the open country they chase hares, rats, and snakes with sticks, in short, all the small game which is to be found there. When there is water in the vicinity, they fish for frogs and fish. They also pick berries from bushes, etc.

[292] Their clothing consists of a kind of skirt which goes down to their ankles and which is made of old garments torn to shreds, of frayed cotton bands.

In the evening from time to time the bankonsé have tom-tom sessions near the shed where they sleep in the village. The griot /drummers, minstrels/ come and play on their instruments. Since this is done at night, men, women, and children may attend.

304 425 881 The bankonsé are entitled to ransack the bush and to take everything they find: chickens, goats, sheep, cotton, etc. The owners have no right to object, but this applies only to small livestock. The bankonsé have no right to larger animals and horses.